

## Questions for OIR Director Confirmation

### Leadership/Management

- 1. Your background demonstrates a strong commitment to developing relationships with governmental partners and collaborative problem solving. How do you think that experience and background is going to shape your approach to the way the Office of Intergovernmental Relations approaches its work, especially when it comes to working with both parties in Olympia?**

I strongly believe the City is most effective over the long term when we have strong, collaborative relationships with partners at all levels of government. This can take many forms, but it's essential the City always have a seat at the table and that we participate meaningfully and effectively. For my team, that means arriving prepared and actively listening, maintaining open two-way communication, offering transparency, and showing respect and understanding for the intricacies of our partner's unique governments and politics.

I've had the opportunity to directly serve elected officials at the state, regional, and local government level. In each role, I've demonstrated my ability to forge relationships with people from diverse regions, backgrounds, and ideologies. In my role with the State House Democrats, I worked closely and effectively with experienced members of House leadership as well as freshmen, members from the most urban district in Seattle to the most rural areas of Clallam County, and members who identify as progressives as well as members who identify as moderates. In my role as Council Relations Director at King County, I worked with Democrats and Republicans on the Council to find consensus on extremely important, sometimes contentious, issues including public safety, budgets and revenue, and housing. These examples illustrate my commitment to collaboration and finding consensus to solve problems and achieve meaningful results for the public.

On some issues, OIR faces the challenge of providing our best advice to elected officials with regards to maintaining positive relationships with other governments, while also keeping the interests of Seattle residents at the forefront of our work. It is a delicate balance that emphasizes why we must always be cultivating and stewarding our relationships with government partners.

- 2. How do you frame the role of the City's State Legislative Agenda in advancing the City's legislative priorities and what are your ideas for improving the efficacy of this tool?**

The City's State Legislative Agenda is one of the key components of the City's overall legislative strategy. The written agenda provides a guiding document and reminder to

legislators, especially our Seattle delegation, of the City's policy priorities and positions. To be truly effective, the City should also be well represented on the ground in Olympia by a team of both in-house and contract lobbyists who meet with legislators to advocate for the City, provide testimony, and engage with other local governments to promote shared priorities.

Legislative sessions are fast, legislators and staff are extremely busy, and so to be effective it's crucial our written agenda be something they can easily absorb and carry. As such, as OIR has met with Council offices to discuss the legislative agenda, we've expressed a strong interest and found mutual alignment in scaling the City's Legislative Agenda back to a two to three-page document. It will be a challenge to reflect all the shared priorities of the Executive, the Council, and the departments in a shorter document, but I'm confident our team has the skill to effectively capture and communicate what they've heard and work with all parties to find alignment.

**3. In the first few months on the job, what have you learned to be the biggest challenges and opportunities for the Office of Intergovernmental Relations?**

As with many other governments in Washington, the City is facing a serious budget crisis. At the City, OIR plays a crucial role in finding both funding and policy solutions to address this crisis. Our role, and what I see as our biggest opportunity, is to ensure we are securing federal, state, and local resources to address funding challenges. To aid these efforts, I intend to lead my team by working closely with City departments and regional governments and funding agencies, as well as providing assistance and support, and encouraging and maintaining positive relationships with our federal delegation, King County, and the suburban cities that surround Seattle.

I pride myself in being a creative problem solver, so I look for opportunity in every challenge. Over the past four months, I've been deeply invested in identifying funding sources, crafting strategy to secure funding, and improving processes to ensure OIR is properly situated to advocate for the City at every level of government. This includes frequent funding discussions with our federal lobbying team in Washington, DC, participation in intergovernmental groups and task forces to coordinate and strengthen funding requests at the state and local level, looking for opportunities to organize tours of city projects with state and federal elected officials, and more detailed internal tracking systems.

**4. Councilmembers serve on several regional committees, such as the Board of Health, King County Regional Homelessness Authority, Sound Transit, the Puget Sound Regional Council and its subcommittees, etc. Do you have any ideas for**

**strengthening efforts to ensure Councilmembers' participation best helps achieve the City of Seattle's policy goals?**

The City is most effective over the long term when we are regular and collaborative participants in regional conversations. Many new councilmembers have made a strong effort to attend their regional committees, including frequently attending hybrid meetings in person. Regular participation helps our members develop relationships with regional elected officials and demonstrates our respect for the work that is done in these committees and boards. This respect and understanding helps us when we have positions that we need to advocate for. I am grateful for the Council's participation in regional committees, and under my leadership, OIR will seek more opportunities to work with councilmembers ahead of high-need votes for the City, to strategize and advocate among your fellow committee members, potentially in the form of member to member asks.

I have appreciated how our new Council has also made an effort to be available for briefings and preparation from OIR and our departmental policy experts. This is helpful in allowing our committee representatives to get up to speed on issues that can be long running and technical and giving us time to sync up on strategy. Advanced preparation puts our members in the best position to advocate effectively during complex negotiations with other government leaders.

**5. Are there any missing components or unexplored options in the City's current approach to working with governmental partners and/or advancing legislative actions that you believe should be addressed? If so, please describe here these issues and your ideas or suggestions for change.**

While I'm very proud of the work our team is currently doing, as referenced in my responses to questions 2 and 4, I do think there is room for more engagement and effective communication with government partners. The Executive and Council together have ambitious agendas to achieve. A coordinated approach, working with all areas of government and our governmental partners, will be necessary to solve some of the tough problems we are facing today.

During my short time at the City, OIR is engaging more with State legislators and Federal delegation staff outside of legislative sessions, seeking opportunities to brief them on ongoing projects, organizing project tours, developing a more concise State Legislative Agenda, and coordinating with councilmembers to advocate for the City's needs with the Association of Washington Cities. The Council is amongst the most powerful voices the City has, and I have appreciated many councilmembers' willingness to advocate for major priorities when approached by OIR.

I'm committed to continuous improvement and hope councilmembers will feel welcome to share their ideas and feedback with me directly.

### **Council Relations:**

- 1. OIR is an Executive department and the OIR Director is appointed by the Mayor. How do you intend to balance being a member of the Mayor's Cabinet with the vital role of providing unbiased, complete, and timely information to all branches of City government?**

As the Director of OIR, I'm committed to transparency and keeping all communication channels open. OIR staff take our unique role of reporting to both the Mayor and Council very seriously.

My experience working for an Executive, as well as a legislative body, and my experience here heading a department have well prepared me to understand and balance the diverse needs of each group. To illustrate this, I'd look to OIR's work as we approach the State legislative session. Over the summer, we've worked hard to solicit priorities, needs, and feedback from departments, the Council, and the Mayor, creating new systems and strategies for effectively managing the incoming information. As we work to understand and prioritize the list and create an effective document that is easy for legislators to absorb, we're committed to a transparent, well-balanced process with no surprises for interested parties at the City. This includes timely two-way engagement with internal and external partners.

Our team plans to offer weekly check-ins with offices during the legislative session and to provide weekly briefings to the Council and the public. Our individual check-ins ensure we have a solid understanding of each councilmember's priorities and an opportunity to update you on arising issues with your policy priorities, making the City as a whole more effective in Olympia. Our Council briefings also provide a wonderful opportunity to share information about the City's work in Olympia with the public, and for City departments to track policy debates in real time.

- 2. How would you resolve a situation where there was a disagreement between the Executive and the Council? How would you approach this situation?**

Seattle is a diverse city, and our residents hold a variety of views, needs, lived experience, and access to government. As such, elected officials and constituents alike hold differing viewpoints on policy and issues and an important part of the legislative process is to allow all viewpoints to be expressed and heard.

As the Director of OIR, I will respect the desire of every City elected official to express their personal and collective views. My team and I are always available to work together to prepare effective testimony and letters of support or opposition, either on behalf of an individual councilmember, the collective Council, or the City as a whole. Throughout OIR's history there are many examples of the Executive and councilmembers holding varying views from one another. We will continue to provide avenues for expression of those views.

The very nature of the legislative process is to understand where there is alignment and differences of view on policy issues. I'm committed to transparency and will make sure the Council and the Executive are aware of differences of view emerging with pieces of legislation and will work closely with the team at OIR to help legislators know when City policymakers are on the same page and where positions may diverge.

**3. Do you have any suggestions for improving how the Council and Office of Intergovernmental Relations work together? How would you suggest more effectively responding to Council interests?**

OIR strives to be extremely responsive to the Council and we're committed to frequent engagement with your offices. I think one of the key elements for working together is maintaining frequent and open lines of communication. This might take the form of regular check ins between OIR and Council offices but could also be more one-off topic specific meetings, or of course picking up the phone and calling one another. Each Council office is unique and has their own preferences and I welcome a custom approach based on your preferred style of engagement

Staff-level communication is helpful for maintaining these channels for information sharing. We can better provide strategic guidance when we have a deep understanding of Council goals and direction.

In my short time with the City, I've been encouraged by the receptiveness of Council offices to meeting with me and my team and grateful for my growing relationships with you and your teams. Hearing councilmembers' interests and passions directly in my meet and greets has been incredibly helpful, and our state team greatly appreciated and benefited from their meetings earlier this summer with your offices to hear about legislative session priorities. It is through this direct and frequent communication that OIR is best positioned to be your advocates and provide strategic feedback at every level of government that your offices engage with.